

PROCEEDINGS
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DESCRIPTION OF A BRACHYSPIZA FROM THE
CHACO OF ARGENTINA AND PARAGUAY.

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During a review of the more southern forms of the South American song sparrow, incident to the identification of a series of specimens collected by the writer during 1920 and 1921, a subspecies previously undescribed has been recognized from the region known as the Chaco. Its characters may be known from the following diagnosis.

Brachyspiza capensis mellea, subsp. nov.

Characters.—Similar to *Brachyspiza capensis argentina* Todd but paler; underparts mainly white with no distinct wash of gray on breast; sides and flanks much lighter, more buffy; brown half collar on hindneck lighter; dorsal surface lighter particularly on rump, with dark longitudinal streaks somewhat more restricted.

Description.—Type, U. S. National Museum, Cat. No. 284146, adult male, collected 80 kilometres west of Puerto Pinasco, Paraguay, September 16, 1920, by Alex. Wetmore (orig. No. 5010). Median crown stripe moderately wide, grayer than pale mouse gray; superciliary stripe white with a wash of pale olive-gray, extended to base of bill where it is slightly expanded; basal feathers dull white with an admixture of black; auricular region pale mouse gray, indistinctly streaked with white; broad lateral crown stripes, line behind eye, another below auricular region and a spot on either side of breast black; a few hair-like black feathers above anterior canthus of eye; feathers on lower eyelid white, those below eye whitish mixed with black; collar on hindneck rather narrow, extended around to black spot on either side of breast, in color slightly duller than tawny; back, rump, upper tail-coverts and scapulars light grayish olive; back and scapulars streaked with black, with a distinct space between longitudinal streaks and brown collar on hindneck; external webs of scapulars bordered with avellaneous; flight feathers blackish brown; primaries edged narrowly with dull pale olive-buff; secondaries more broadly margined with avellaneous, almost white at tips; wing coverts blackish brown; lesser wing coverts margined with smoke gray; median wing coverts tipped with white forming

a wing band; greater wing coverts margined with avellaneous and tipped with white, the latter forming a second wing bar; tail brownish black, outer webs of feathers margined with dull olive-buff; under surface mainly white; sides paler than pale smoke gray, with a slight wash of cartridge buff; flanks washed with buffy brown.

Measurements (in millimeters).—Males (two specimens): Wing 69.9¹–70.0, tail 56.2–57.8,¹ culmen 11.8¹–12.2, tarsus 20¹–21.2. Female (one specimen): Wing 64.0, tail 55.2, culmen 12.0, tarsus 20.5.

Range.—The Chaco region in Formosa, Argentina (Kilometre 182, northwest of Formosa) and Paraguay (west of Puerto Pinasco).

Remarks.—The present form of the widely spread South American song sparrow in its characters is suggestive of two subspecies that have been previously recognized, namely *Brachospiza c. argentina* and *B. c. hypoleuca*. In the diagnosis sufficient explanation has been made of the manner in which *B. c. mellea* differs from the form first named, which ranges throughout the Pampan region of Argentina, and adjoins *mellea* on the south. From *B. c. hypoleuca* the subspecies here described as new differs in much grayer, less rufescent dorsal surface, and in the distinct space that separates the area of longitudinal stripes from the bright brown collar. In addition *mellea* is even whiter below than *hypoleuca*, has the sides of the neck grayer, and the sides and flanks paler, grayer, less bright in color. The two forms under discussion should meet somewhere along the western border of the Chaco.

¹Type specimen.